Making Sugar Co-operative Globally competitive

910. SHRI PRAFUL GORADIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether sugar co-operatives in different States of the country are facing crisis due to mismanagement and lack of professionalism;

(b) if so, what action Government propose to take to enable the co-operatives to survive this problem; and

(c) whether Government would think of a comprehensive long term policy on sugar import and export to enable the co-operatives to face the global competition?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) The functioning of the cooperative sugar mills comes under the perview of respective State Government. So far no State Government has reported any lack of professionalism in running the cooperative sugar factories.

However, the Central Government is providing financial assistance from the Sugar Development Fund to the sugar mills on soft terms for cane development and modernisation/rehabilitation schemes.

(c) The Government have already announced various measures for bringing the importers on par with the indigenous producers of sugar, such as introduction of release mechanism, imposition of levy and enhancement of of custom duty to 60%.

The exports of sugar depends on various factors, like, price of sugar in the international market, cost of production of sugar etc. At present, due to low international sugar prices, the exports of sugar are not viable.

Siphoning off of essential commodities through PDS

911. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the essential commodities meant for

public distribution are diverted from ration shops as reported in the Statesman dated the 8th February, 2000;

(b) if so, whether the Union Government have devised ways to stop such illegal diversion completely;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Union Government have discussed the issue with the State Government also; and

(e) if so, the reaction and response of State Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) The Tata Economic consultancy Services (TECS) was engaged in the year 1997 for a study to assess the extent of diversion of foodgrains, sugar and edible oil from Public Distribution System (PDS) in the country. The study estimated the diversion of wheat at 36%, rice at 31%, sugar at 23% and edible oil at 55% at the national level.

(b) and (c) Public distribution System is implemented under the joint responsibility of the Central and State Governments/UT Administrations. The Central Government is responsible for procurement, storage and transportation of the PDS commodities up to the central godowns and making them available to the States. The responsibility for distribution to the consumers through the fair Price Shops and administration of the PDS rests with the State Government and UT Administrations. State Government have been requested to closely monitor PDS at the Fair Price Shops (FPSs) and other levels and to make arrangement for distribution of PDS commodities in a transparent and accountable manner by involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and consumer organizations in implementation of PDS. They have also been asked to eliminate bogus ration cards and initiate action against erring FPS owners under Section 3 of Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

The Government of India have set up Public Grievances' Redressal Cell in the Department of Public Distribution to attend to the

complaints relating to any aspect of the Department's functioning including the Public Distribution System. The Public Grievances' Redressal Cell has been provided with independent telephone, fax and e-mail facilities in addition to a facilitation counter to receive the public complaints. In order to attend to public complaints on priority, the Department has also designated senior officers of the Department as members of flying squad for conducting immediate and prompt enquiry whenever the need for it is felt. The Government of India also has appointed Area Officers to States/UTs to monitor the functioning of Public Distribution System including the complaints of diversion.

(d) and (e) The matter has been taken up with the State Governments and reviewed in a meeting of the State Food Secretaries first on 10.8.98 and subsequent discussions with representatives of the State Governments. Many States, while disagreeing with the estimates of diversion brought out in the study, recognized that leakages do take place. Several States stated that bogus ration cards were being weeded out in special drives. States like Tamil Nadu and Haryana have issued computerised ration cards with photograph of the head of family to prevent misuse. The State Governments have been requested to streamline their delivery system and to take steps to curb the diversion and to weed out the bogus units. The State Governments have been asked to adopt the Citizen's Charter that ensures the consumer's right to information.

Export of wheat

912. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to export wheat in view of the substantial increase in foodgrains stock;

(b) if so, the details of countries to which Government propose to export wheat and under what terms and conditions;